

British Rail: A Mass Transport System Is an Essential Public Service Not a Get-Rich-Quick Scheme for Investors

Britain's Railways Performance Proof of Abject Failure of Conservative Privatisation Policies

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Outdated rolling-stock, primitive or no air-conditioning, poor service, unreliable timetables and sky-high fares make Britain's railways the bad joke of Europe.

As millions of commuters are forced to use a rail system near to collapse, it serves a stark warning of the dangers of privatising vital utility services in a bid by Conservative governments to further enrich a handful of businessmen and political funders at the expense of millions of rail travellers.

Throughout Europe, national rail systems are invariably state-owned and run.

The **Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français** (SNCF), is the national state-owned railway company of France. Founded in 1938, it operates the country's national rail traffic along with Monaco, including the TGV, France's high-speed rail network. Its functions include operation of railway services for passengers and freight, and maintenance and signalling of rail infrastructure. The railway network consists of about 32,000 km (20,000 mi) of route, of which 1,800 km (1,100 mi) are high-speed lines and 14,500 km (9,000 mi) electrified. About 14,000 trains are operated daily.

Today, the SNCF operates 1,850 km (1,150 mi) of designated high-speed track that accommodate more than 800 high-speed services per day. SNCF's TGV trains carry more than 100 million passengers a year and TGV lines and technology are now spread across several European countries.

In Germany, **Deutsche Bahn AG** is owned 100% by the Federal Republic of Germany. DB is the largest railway operator and infrastructure owner in Europe. It carries about two billion passengers each year and employs over 300,000 people.

The DB group is divided into a large number of companies, including DB Fernverkehr (long-distance passenger), DB Regio (local passenger services) and DB Cargo (rail freight). The Group subsidiary DB Netz also operates large parts of the German railway infrastructure and thus the largest rail network in Europe.

Only in the United Kingdom, are millions of commuters forced to pay inflated fares for a rail service stuck in the 1950s with dilapidated trains managed by grossly inefficient private operators. It is a national disgrace that is now under the control of an inappropriate

Transport Minister, a former web and print marketer with no knowledge whatsoever of transport systems who was obliged to stand down from a previous ministerial position due to allegations of bullying.

The future for rail travellers in Britain looks bleak indeed until this government is replaced and Britain's railways are brought back into 100% public ownership, modernised, financed and run efficiently by professionals, as elsewhere throughout Europe.

The reality is that many rail investors have become richer as rail transport services in Britain have become measurably more and more inefficient. And that is completely unacceptable in the world's fifth largest economy with a population of 67 million.

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